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MARTIN LUTHER IN CATHOLIC HISTORIOGRAPHY: FOUR CENTURIES OF GERMAN SCHOLARSHIP

INDEPENDENT STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

Roman Catholic attitudes toward Martin Luther underwent a metamorphosis in the twentieth century. For over four hundred years, Catholic scholars depicted the Reformer as a heretical schismatic. Exsurge Domine, the papal bull of excommunication issued by Leo X on June 15, 1520, set the tone for future Catholic biographers of the Reformer:

> Arise, O Lord, and judge thy cause. A wild boar has invaded thy vineyard. We can scarcely express our grief over the ancient heresies which have been revived . . . Anyone who presumes to infringe our excommunication and anathema will stand under the wrath of Almighty God and of the apostles Peter and Paul.[1]

The Pope saw Luther as the "son of iniquity" who "perverts the faith, seduces the simple, and relaxes the bonds of obedience, continence, and humility."[2] Although Exsurge Domine remains an official pronouncement, Catholic historians began a significant re-evaluation of the Reformer in this century. The ecumenical movement and the pronouncements of Vatican II paved the way for Catholics to take Luther and his reformation seriously. Far from condemning him and slandering his character, some contemporary Catholics actually suggested canonizing the former Augustinian monk as a basic step toward healing the sixteenth century schism.[3]

This paper attempts to survey the major Roman Catholic biographies and scholarly essays written about Luther between 1550 and 1965. It seeks to demonstrate how Catholic attitudes toward the Reformer have changed, especially in the twentieth century. The paper primarily focuses upon literature produced by German scholars.

LUTHER IN CATHOLIC HISTORIOGRAPHY IN GERMANY DURING THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES: COCHLAEUS, PISTORIUS, AND VETTER

The first major assault leveled at Luther by Catholic scholarship came only three years after his death. In 1549 John Dobendeck, better known as Cochlaeus, published his Commentaria on the life of Martin Luther.[4]

Formerly a humanist sympathetic with the reform effort, Cochlaeus turned against Luther and set out to discredit his movement and defame his memory. In a bitter and slanderous attack, Cochlaeus used rumor to discredit the Reformer's character. The author argued that Luther, as an Augustinian monk, was jealous of the lucrative indulgence trade enjoyed by Tetzel and the Dominicans. Hence the quarrel over indulgences had no theological or moral foundation because it was based upon Luther's greed.[5] In addition to being jealous, greedy, and quarrelsome, Luther was also incredibly immoral. At the age of fifteen he indulged in illicit sex with his benefactress, Frau cotta zu Eisenach.[6] As a young Augustinian monk, he lived in concubinage with three nuns, during which time he allegedly contracted venereal disease.[7] For Cochlaeus, Luther's conception was the fruit of a union between Satan and Luther's mother who later regretted not having murdered him in the cradle.[8] Thus the leader of the Protestant Reformation was the child of Satan. Upon Luther's death, his "Father" appears to drag him off to hell.[9]

This picture would be humorous if not for the fact that Catholic historians relied heavily upon Cochlaeus' Commentaria as a

primary source for scholarly study well into the twentieth century. Although the work compiled and preserved an interesting body of sixteenth century literature, the author ignored accounts of Luther as told by Melanchthon or other Protestants close to the Reformer. The Commentaria was a collection of unreliable stories that depicted Luther as an immoral demon designed to dissuade the faithful from joining his movement. The work set a polemical standard and provided a ready resource for Catholic historians.

Following the lead of Cochlaeus, John Pistorius published his Anatomiae Lutheri from Cologne in 1595.[10] Pistorius was a physician and counsellor to the Margrave of Baden. Belonging to the second generation of the Reformation, he was a former Calvinist who became a staunch supporter of the Catholic faith. Claiming to have read Luther's complete works three times, Pistorius reflected his medical background by performing a dissection of Luther's personality. Seven Devils, including the Spirits of Whordom, Blasphemy, and Lewdness, possessed the Reformer.[11] Pistorius subdivided each of these three Spirits, in imitation of the Koran, into seven sections or "Alyoars" in an attempt to equate Luther with pagan infidelity.[12] Additionally, Luther was plagued by the Evil Spirits of Error, Insolence, Pride, and Fraudulence.[13] In a five-hundred page discussion, the author assembled a list of quotes designed to portray Luther as a demonic infidel. Pistorius' use of quotes was a good example of what happens when one reads the works of an opponent for the sole purpose of gathering polemical ammunition.[14]

The writing of the Jesuit Conrad Vetter represented the culmination of this sixteenth century polemical attack. Born at

Engen in 1547, he joined the Society of Jesus in 1576 and became an active writer and preacher near Munich. He preached several years at Ratisbon, where many Lutherans converted to Catholicism under his ministry.[15] Before his death in 1622, Vetter wrote hundreds of books and popular tracts aimed at discrediting Luther and Protestantism. Scheid, writing in the 1912 edition of the Catholic Encyclopedia, said, "Vetter used all the coarseness of which the Swabian tongue is capable to disparage Luther; so that involuntarily Luther's similar style is recalled."[16]

Vetter, along with Cochlaeus and Pistorius, refused to consider the possibility that anything good might exist in Luther. They believed it appropriate to deal harshly with one who had maliciously torn the Church asunder and led millions astray through heretical teachings. It was the sole purpose of their writings to depict Luther as the personification of evil, the adversary of the Church, and the enemy of truth.

LUTHER IN CATHOLIC HISTORIOGRAPHY IN GERMANY DURING THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

The Catholic attacks against Luther continued in the eighteenth century with the works of John Nikolaus Weislinger, a parish priest at Waldulm. Weislinger studied philosophy at the University of Heidelberg beginning in 1713. After graduation, he prepared for ordination as a priest under the direction of Jesuits at Strasburg.[17] His most famous work was the slanderous pamphlet "Friss Vogel order stirb!" [There is no choice!], published at Strasburg in 1723. He wrote his argument in coarse and vulgar language. Weislinger wrote

other polemical treatises, and his works were read throughout southern Germany. His work enjoyed popular appeal and underwent several printings.

Mid-century brought the publication of a two volume work intended to expose the immorality of Luther and his wife, Catherine von Bora. In 1774 Eusebius Englehard published Lucefer Wittenbergenis, or the Morning star of Wittenberg; that is the complete life of Catherine von Bora, the presumed wife of Dr. Martin Luther, out of his dirty tabletalk, spirited epistles, and other rare documents in which all her apparent virtues, invented achievements, fake appearances, and miserable wonderworks by the side of the whole canonization process, are related by her husband during her lifetime.[18] This lengthy and vivid title was itself a sufficient commentary on the contents of the book. As the title suggested, Catherine and Martin appeared as something less than outstanding examples of Christian virtue.

The nineteenth century brought a somewhat more moderate evaluation. The influence of Leopold von Ranke upon German historians brought a more objective methodology to historical inquiry. John Adam Mohler, a brilliant professor of history at the University of Tubingen and later at Munich, published in 1832 a book entitled Symbolik.[19] The work was a critique of Luther's style that exhibits an objectivity heretofore unknown in past Catholic studies.[20] Although Mohler accused Luther of Manichaeism, the book marked a transition in methodology and a slight improvement in tone.[21] Faulkner said that Mohler's book introduced a "new era" in German Roman Catholic studies of Luther, and that his successors

"never descended to the depths of their predecessors."[22]

Mohler's successor and sometimes rival, Johannes Joseph Ignaz von Dollinger, represented a partial return to the extreme polemical style of Cochlaeus and Pistorious. Between 1846 and 1848, he published three volumes entitled, Die Reformation.[23] A historian of the Tubingen School, Dollinger believed that Protestantism, Liberalism, and Rationalism represented breaks with the traditional past. He attacked von Ranke and other Protestant historians, stressing the importance of religious tradition. he used terms like "organic growth" and "consistent development" to express his theory of Church History. In Die Reformation, he described what he believed to be the disastrous effects of Luther's doctrine of Justification by Faith. The Reformation destroyed the unity and authority of Latin Christendom, and became the seed-bed of rational philosophy.[24].

He collected a body of quotations about the Reformation made by both Protestant and Catholics and strung them together creating an incriminating case against Protestantism. He gathered statements made by Luther about the inability of Reformers to agree and cooperate together. These statements came from Luther's sermons, table talk, and letters. This supposed self-incriminating evidence became "proof" that the Reformer himself regretted the break with Rome.[25] Although Luther did speak frankly and sometimes tactlessly about the failures of the Reformation, he remained convinced until the end of his life that reform was both right and necessary.[26] Dollinger forgot that it was the task of the historian to critically evaluate the context as well as the content of quotes used as evidence. a vocal critic of growing papal claims to power in the

second half of the nineteenth century, Dollinger's attitude toward Luther mellowed in later life, particularly after his excommunication in 1871.[27]

John Janssen, a German catholic historian and Professor of History at the Frankfurt Gymnasium, published a massive work entitled, Geschichte des deustchen Volkes in eight volumes.[28] The author portrayed the late Medieval period as a golden age while depicting the Reformation as a period of decline. Janseen saw the Medieval Church as a dynamic institution aware of its internal weaknesses. Events in Germany shattered its own attempts at self-reformation.[29] Moreover, the Reformation was a product of Luther's diseased character, his megalomania and his low moral stature.[30] Janssen attributed many of Germany's subsequent political and social problems to the destructive forces released by Luther and Protestantism.[31]

At the close of the nineteenth century, no Catholic historian had attempted to treat Luther fairly, with the possible exception of John Mohler. The sixteenth and seventeenth century works, represented by Cochlaeus, Pistorius, and Vetter, severed only to arm eighteenth and nineteenth century writers with a massive amount of polemical source material. The attack of Dollinger, Janssen, and others were just as malicious as those of earlier writers. Rather than trying to understand the religious motives behind his actions, Catholic historians attacked him as a heretical schismatic who destroyed the unity of the Church. Unfortunately, this prevailing attitude remained dominate in Catholicism until well into the twentieth century.

LUTHER IN CATHOLIC HISTORIOGRAPHY IN GERMANY DURING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The dawning of the twentieth century brought the what some consider to be the most able attack leveled against Luther since the sixteenth century. Father Heinrich Seuse Denifle published an eight-hundred-sixty page work at Manz in 1904 entitled, Luther und Luthertum.[32] The author was a Tyrolean Dominican and subarchivist at the Vatican Library. Denifle had a good reputation in scholarly circles, having published several works on fourteenth century mysticism. As associate to the General of the Dominican Order, he traveled across Europe searching for manuscripts to be included in a new edition of the works of Thomas Aquinas. In 1885 he helped compile the Archive for Literature and Church History of the Middle Ages, an important resource for the study of Medieval Church History.

Luther und Luthertum was not a biography in the traditional sense but rather a collection of articles that examine Luther's understanding of Christian doctrine.[33] The author limited himself to an exhaustive study of primary source material and had at his disposal Luther's unpublished lectures on Romans. Reflecting upon his work Denifle declared "My sole source for the study of Luther was Luther.[34] This was an improvement in methodology. However, Denifle made clear his position on Luther and the Reformation when he wrote:

> Once admit that Protestantism and Catholicism are two equally authorized religious convictions which represent at the most two different aspects of the Christian life, then if one of the sides is heretical, so is the other.[35]

What caused the Reformation? Denifle answered this question

in terms of Luther's ignorance of theology, immoral disposition, and his doctrine of Justification by Faith.[36] Luther exemplified a profound ignorance of Catholic theology, especially as expressed in Scholastic Thomism. When John Eck and other Catholic scholars pointed this out, Luther was to proud to receive instruction, admit his error, and submit to the authority of the Church. Because he was an theological ignoramus, he consistently misquoted Augustine, the Rhineland Mystics, and other ancient and contemporary writers. Moreover, he consistently misquoted Scripture and misrepresented the teachings and practices of the Church in order to defend his ridiculous doctrines.[37] Luther was the victim of William of Occam's Nominalism, and he exhibited no appreciation for Scholasticism.[38] Far from contributing anything new or rediscovering anything of significance from the past, Luther demonstrated a profound disregard for historical theology.

Another key factor in Denifle's understanding of the Reformation was Luther's basic immorality. He was a man of the gutter, engaging in all manner of indecent language and obscene vulgarities.[39] The author made the most of Luther's marriage, charging that the only motive for the union was lust. Where Pistorius saw Luther's death as the result of venereal disease, Denifle was sure that he died of alcoholism.[40] Disguised as scientific objectivity, he accused the Reformer of pornography, vice, debauchery, drunkenness and seduction. Drawn up as a list of indictments, these charges culminated in a paragraph which Denifle entitled "The Christian Character of Luther."[41] Several times throughout his work, the author printed in bold type the indignant question, "Luther, is nothing sacred for

you?"[42]

Finally, Luther's doctrine of Justification by Faith was primarily responsible for the catastrophic division of the Church. Because he was a thoroughly licentious person, Justification by faith became a cover-up for Luther's own sins.[43] The doctrine was an invention used to excuse his exceptional sensuality. Incredibly, the author absolutely ignores the Reformer's religious struggle prior to 1520. Perhaps Faulkner has best summed up Denifle's caricature of Luther:

> . . . The only trouble with Luther was his lust, his sin, and that to be free to sin . . . he broke from the Church, he repudiated his vows as a monk, he made up this doctrine of salvation by faith, which was not salvation from sin, but rest in sin; that it represented no inner cleansing, but an artificial covering of a life to be given over to indulgence.[44]

Thus, Luther's reform effort was merely a hypocritical mask designed to hide his depravity.

It soon became apparent that Denifle's attempted character assassination could only be taken seriously by the most anti-Protestant Catholic historians. The Church needed a successor who could discredit Luther in a more subtle tone. The Jesuit Professor at the University of Innsbruck, Hartman Grisar, took it upon himself to revise the Denifle thesis. Between 1911-12 he published three volumes, simply titled Luther, spanning more than two thousand pages.[45]

Unlike Denifle, who saw Luther as a demon to be exorcised, Grisar saw him as a pitiful psychopath who needed medical treatment. Luther was physically, mentally, and spiritually ill. He suffered from bad heredity because his father was a drunkard and his mother

melancholic.[46] This accounted for his "epileptic deposition," but failed to explain the gossip about his suffering from syphilis.[47] Luther, the maladjusted neurotic, suffered an incurable emotional shock when, at age twenty-two, she was almost struck by lightning near Stotternheim.[48] The thunderstorm experience confused and complicated his already maladjusted personality. He entered the monastery as a neurotic, and tragically ended up as a hopeless psychopath.[49]

Whatever Protestants affirmed about Luther, Grisar rejected. He denied that Justification by Faith was the result of an inward conversion experience. He also rejected the interpretation that Luther's religious transformation resulted from his dissatisfaction with monastic life or from his failure to find peace with God through good works.[50] Furthermore, he denied the Reformer's struggle with the Church arose out of the indulgence controversy. The author summed up his understanding of Luther's break with Rome in the following passage:

> The real origin of Luther's teaching must be sought in the fundamental principle which governed him . . . This was his unfavorable estimate of good works and of any effort, natural or supernatural, on the part of man.[51]

Grisar's approach was more subtle than Denifle's violent assault, although both shared the common objective of destroying Luther's religious credibility.[52] To his credit, Grisar refused to portray the Reformer as a wholesale liar and an immoral reprobate. He said "the only arguments on which these assertions of great inward corruption could be stated, viz. actual texts and facts capable of convincing anyone . . . simply are not forthcoming.[53] Nevertheless,

Grisar wrote of the Protestant Reformation when he wrote, "Luther is finished and the number of those few who really confess his doctrine and keep his doctrine are noticeably decreasing."[54]

Catholic scholarship remained relatively unchanged until the last months of World War I. The genesis of a more progressive interpretation of the Reformer and his word began with an article in the periodical Hochland, entitled "Martin Luthers religiose Psyche."[55] The author was frances Kiefl, Professor of Theology at the University of Wurzburg. He created a more favorable climate for ecumenical study by conceding that Luther was a truly religious person. Luther's effort to reform the Church proceeded from religious motives. Kiefl wrote, "the primary religious motivation in Luther, which has set its mark on the Reformation for centuries, is indelibly religious.[56]

Kiefl took issue with Denifle's thesis at two points. First, Luther's doctrine of Justification by Faith was no basis for excommunication from the Church (p. 15). The proclamation of this belief did not signal a moral regression by the Reformer because the ultimate result of faith was good works (p. 16). Thus, Luther's theology did not result from his need to justify his own immorality. Second, Kiefl maintained that Luther was not ignorant of Catholic theology, but displayed a sound knowledge of orthodox doctrine. Kiefl argued that Luther demonstrated a better understanding of Catholic dogma than Erasmus and other humanists (pp.20-21).

Kiefl also criticized Grisar's interpretation. He took the psychopathic personality attributed to Luther and reinterpreted it in terms of religious experience.[57] Although Luther went to far with

his emphasis on the Omnipotence of God and limited human freedom, he was nevertheless an authentic reformer.

Following this landmark development in Catholic historiography, twelve years passed before Alfred von Martin edited a collection of essays by both Catholic and Protestant theologians entitled, Luther in okumenischer Sicht.[58] Three of those essays bore a particular relevance to this discussion.

Sabastian Merkle in his article, "Gutes an Luther und Ubles an seinen Tadlern,"[59] urged Catholic historians to refrain from slandering Luther and to recognize the religious motives behind his reformation (p. 11). Merkle, disputing Janssen's thesis, argued the Church did indeed suffer from moral corruption and needed reform. If this were not the case, wrote Merkle, then Luther "would have to appear as the greatest miracle-worker in history, if he had brought about the mass exodus from a thriving Church at the high point of achieving its task."[60]

John Albani, in an article entitled, "Hat Luther mit der Kirchen gebrochen? Brach die Kirche mit ihm?" asked a perceptive question fundamental to understanding the Reformation.[61] He answered by saying that Luther did not break with the Church, but with the priesthood, and only then after the priesthood had broken with him (p. 72). Luther erred in his estimation that the Catholic hierarchy was dispensable, but correct in his observation that the individual soul received too little attention in Church dogma (p. 71). A third essay, written by Anton Fischer, entitled "Was der betende Luther der ganzen Christenheit zu sagen hat."[62] Fischer maintained the key to understanding Luther lay in the Reformer's prayer life. Luther based

his prayers upon Scripture (p. 189). Fischer called attention to the fact that Luther placed God the Father in the center of the Christian's prayer life (p. 194). The author concluded this sympathetic treatment with the following ecumenical plea:

> The fighting Luther wounds; the praying Luther heals!
> The fighting Luther divides, the praying Luther unites!
> Luther the fighter belongs to the past; Luther the man of prayer - may his mission begin in the present![63]

The historian Hubert Jedin from the University of Breslau continued this line of thought. In 1931 he published Die Erforschung der kirchlichen Reformationgeschichte seit 1876.[64] He criticized Denifle and Grisar, and pointed out that few Catholic historians still held to Denifle's view of Luther's immoral character.[65] Following Kiefl, he saw Luther as a truly religious person.[66] Moreover, he wrote that if Catholics were to understand Luther's thought and motives they must disregard the Church's traditional concept of the Reformer.

Kiefl and other scholars of the early twentieth century laid the foundation for a major reinterpretation of Luther and the Protestant Reformation. In 1939-40, Joseph Lortz published Die Reformation in Deutschland.[67] By choosing to use the term "Reformation" in the title, Lortz recognized the legitimacy of Luther's movement. Formerly, Catholic writers refused to use this term, preferring the words "apostasy" or "schism" to describe events.[68] The study involved almost nine hundred pages dealing with a broad range of religious events. The work was an extended biography with Luther as its central point of focus.

Lortz saw the Church as primarily responsible for the sixteenth

century schism (I. pp. 3-40. The Church was already in a state of fragmentation before the Reformation began. The Avignon Papacy and the Great Schism produced a feeling of cynicism that pervaded the Church. The Papacy's inability to deal with the Turkish threat or the Bohemian heretics further complicated the problem, as did the problem of growing Nationalism in Western Europe (I. pp. 8-9). Within this context of social ferment, Lortz attempted to analyze and understand Luther.

He saw the influence of Occamism upon Luther as fundamental to understanding the Reformation (I. pp. 195-201). Occamism taught that God was arbitrary in his dealings with man. Paradoxically, it placed a heavy emphasis upon man's role in the process of salvation. Luther's concept of sola gratia was a reaction against this dogma (I. p. 196). Lortz, however, denies that Occamism was within the traditional teaching of the Church. He wrote:

> The Occamist system is radically uncatholic. It is easy to see what a colossal burden it was bound to lay upon the over-anxious Luther struggling to feel free from sin (I. p. 196).

Luther revolted against Occamist tendencies that crept into the late Medieval Church. Luther was not a heretic. He attacked heresy within the Church.[69] Thus, the Reformation occurred as the result of a theological misunderstanding between Luther and the Church leadership.

Humanism was another important influence upon Luther. Humanism tends to focus upon man as the primary actor in the cosmic order (I. p. 139). In light of this influence, Luther emphasized individual religious experience and held the Roman priestly hierarchy in

contempt. Lortz refused to characterize Luther as a reprobate whose theology resulted from an uncontrollable urge to sin. Lortz shifted the elements of causation from the person of Luther to the historical milieu of the late Medieval period.

However, Luther did not escape criticism in Lortz's treatment. He argued that Luther's chief fault lay in his subjective approach to religion (I. pp. 183-84); also pp. 204-07). Because he interpreted Scripture in terms of individual needs, he was unable to comprehend the totality of scriptural revelation. His doctrines of Justification by Faith and the Priesthood of the Believer eventually fragmented the Church he sought to reform (I. pp. 443-44). Unlike past scholars, Lortz measured his criticism and refused to resort to polemical rhetoric.

Although the author praised and criticized the Reformer, he book stood as a landmark work for two basic reasons. First, it was a comprehensive, scholarly study by a major Catholic historian that examined Luther and the Reformation in detail. Second, it represented an honest effort to understand Luther's personality, motivations, and movement in a historical context. Die Reformation in Deutschland set the stage for meaningful dialogue between Protestants and Catholics.

Three years after the release of Lortz's book, Adolf Herte published a three volume work entitled Das katholische Lutherbild in Bann der Lutherkommentare des Cochlaus.[70] In over a thousand pages, Herte demonstrated that biographers relied too heavily on the work of Cochlaeus (I. pp. i-ii). He called special attention to the dependency of Denifle and Grisar upon Cochlaeus (II. pp. 328-42; pp.

351-67). He exposed the writings of Cochlaeus as a biased and hateful account intended to destroy Luther's reputation. His work dealt a severe blow to those who insisted on the traditional interpretation of the Reformer.

In 1947 John Hessen, Professor of Philosophy of Religion at the University of Cologne, carried the story of re-evaluation a step further with the publication of Luther in katholischer Sicht.[71] This small work of seventy pages dealt with Luther's theology. Hessen survived the various interpretations of Luther, taking into account the positions of Denifle, Lortz and others (pp. 11-18). He disputed Lortz's position that Luther's most serious error was subjectivism. For Hessen, Luther's religious experience proceeded from Christ as revealed in Scripture. This scriptural foundation was the objective basis for Luther's conversion and subsequent theology (pp. 21-24). Thus, there was no real connection between Luther's thought and modern subjectivism or individualism. Hessen agreed with Lortz that the Church was in need of reform in the early sixteenth century.

In what is perhaps the most favorable treatment of Luther's religious personality by a Catholic scholar, Hessen commends him for preaching the Gospel (pp. 67-68). Luther was a man committed to prayer and sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit (pp. 68-69). For Hessen, an understanding of both the Reformer and the Reformation was key to successful ecumenical discussion.[72]

In 1960, Father Thomas Sartory delivered a series of radio messages broadcast across southern Germany to a large Catholic audience. In four separate messages, he examined Luther from a psychological, historical, theological, and ecumenical perspective.

He published these addresses in 1961 under the title, "Martin Luther in katholischer Sicht" and appeared in the Catholic periodical Una Sancta.[73]

Psychologically, Sartory rejected the psychopathic interpretation of Grisar along with the vulgar assessments of Cochlaeus and Denifle. He concluded that anyone who simultaneously struggled with the Holiness of God and the sinfulness of man would experience the same emotional characteristics displayed by Luther. In the face of an "angry and merciful God," there was little wonder that Luther exhibited "cracks and breaks" in his personality.[74] He argued that one must take into account the reality of sin and the Wrath of God in any psychoanalysis of Luther, and that the intensity and influence of these were difficulty to measure (p. 42).

Historically, Sartory mentioned the negative influence of Cochlaeus and the noble attempt of Adolph Herte to reveal Catholic scholars' dependence on the Commentaria. Moreover, he discussed the positive contributions of Joseph Lortz and others (p. 43). He credited Jedin for pointing out that Catholic leaders at the Council of Trent did not "close the door to conversation" with Protestants, but intentionally left the option open for future dialogue by not formally condemning the Reformer.[75]

Theologically, man and his personal relationship to God was Luther's primary concern. Sartory wrote that Luther would "turn over in his grave," if he were to hear the accusations that he was the proponent of a "subjectivism or a religion of conscience" that taught a moral autonomy.[76] For Luther, the objective standard that controlled man's conscience was not the Church but the Scriptures.

Sartory went on to show how the doctrine of Justification by Faith proceeded from Luther's view of Scripture (p. 48). He believed that Luther stressed the doctrine of Justification by Faith to the exclusion of equally important doctrines such as the Resurrection, and the Lordship of Christ (p. 50).

Ending the article with a discussion of Luther viewed from an ecumenical perspective, Sartory saw Luther as a pastoral figure that both Protestants and Catholics could claim. The ecumenical Luther was a "spiritual man" who preached the Bible with power, expressed worship through hymns, and encountered God through prayer (p. 52). He concluded with an appeal for all Catholics to hear Luther's message as it it related to the Gospel so that they might share the Reformer's passionate love for God (p. 54).

CONCLUSION

From the mid-sixteenth century until the mid-twentieth century, Catholic historians depicted Martin Luther as the enemy of the Church. The works of sixteenth and seventeenth century writers reflected the anathema against Luther pronounced by Leo X in 1520. Cochlaeus' Commentaria represented a collection of half-truths, fables, and lies that characterized the Reformer as demonic heretic. Pistorius built upon this tradition, arranging Luther's own words in an attempt to discredit him. These writers set the polemical tone for Catholic scholarship well into the twentieth century.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, Heinrich Denifle and Hartmann Grisar represented the Mendicant Orders contribution to the crusade against Luther. Using the tools of the modern historical

method, these able scholars developed their related themes of immorality and insanity. They based their multivolume accounts on exhaustive research from primary sources. However, their inability to see Luther as anything less than a heretic prevented a fair appraisal of the Reformer and his work.

The portrait of Luther-the-reprobate and Luther-the-maniac began to change toward the end of World War I. A small group of German Catholics began a reappraisal that eventually revolutionized the Church's understanding of Luther and the Protestant Reformation. In 1917 Frances Kiefl openly questioned Denifle and Grisar, and four hundred years of traditional Catholic interpretation. He boldly affirmed that Luther was a homo religious. More than a decade later, Sabastian Merkel, Anton Fischer, and John Albani developed Kiefl's thesis. Merkel admitted that the sixteenth century Church needed reform. Fischer emphasized Luther's prayer life. Albani shifted the primary responsibility for the schism from Luther to the Catholic Church, claiming the Church first broke with Luther. As the decade of the 1930 approached, a new openness to Luther studies gained momentum within the Church.

The pivotal figure on the twentieth century reappraisal was Joseph Lortz. His Reformation in Germany, published in 1939-40, represented a major reinterpretation by a prominent Catholic scholar in Germany. The significance of Lortz's lay in his desire to thoroughly understand the Reformer and the Reformation. Luther's quarrel was with Occamism, a philosophy created a double bind by stressing at the same time God's sovereignty and man's role in the process of salvation. This reaction along with Luther's religious

subjectivism were major factors that contributed to the Reformation. Lortz offered a fair assessment of Luther that provided a foundation for ecumenical dialogue.

On the eve of Vatican II, Thomas Sartory examined Luther from the psychological, theological, historical, and ecumenical perspectives. He concluded that both Catholics and Protestants should affirm Luther's evangelical message.

Four hundred years separated Cochlaeus and Sartory. Catholic scholarship had come full circle. Luther, once the despised destroyer of Christendom, was finally received by a select group of Church thinkers as a true reformer.

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17. Patricius Schlager, "Johann Nikolaus Weislinger," Catholic Encyclopedia, 15, p. 577.

18. John Alfred Faulkner, "Luther and his Latest Critic" The American Journal of Theology, 9 (1905), p. 360.

19. Johann Adam Mohler, Symbolik: order, Darstellung der dogmatischen Gegensatze der Katholiken und Protestanten, nach ihren offentlichen Bekenntnisschriften (Mainz: F. Kuperferberg, 1832).

20. Faulkner, Latest Critic, p. 360.

21. Ibid., pp. 360-362.

22. Ibid., p. 361. When one considers the slanderous twentieth century critiques of Denifle and Grisar, Faulkner's statement may be too strong.

23. Johann Joseph Ignaz von Dollinger, Die Refformation: ihre innere Entwicklung und ihre Wirkugen im Umfange des Lutherischen Bekenntnisses (Regensburg: G.J. Manz, 1846-48).

24. Walther von Lowwenich, Modern Catholicism, Eng. trans. Reginald H. Fuller (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1959, p. 268.

25. Ibid.

26. Faulkner, "Latest Critic," p. 361. Johann Christian Hofmann points out the weakness of Dollinger's argument, and demonstrates how the same type of argument could be used to discredit the apostle Paul. See Hofmann, Paul: Eine Dollingersche Skizze (1890).

27. von Loewenich, Modern Catholicism, p. 268.

28. Johannes Janssed, Geschicte des deutschen Volkes seit dem Ausgang des Mittelaters. [History of the German People since the End of the Middle Ages]. (Freiburg: Herder, 1806-88).

29. Rupp, Righteousness, p. 22.

30. Ibid, p. 269.

31. Faulkner, "Latest Critic," p. 361.

32. Heinrich S. Denifle, Luther und Luthertum in der ersten Entwickelung: quellenmassig dargestellt [Luther and Luthernism in its Early Development Based Upon Original Sources], II vols. (Mainz: F. Kirchheim, 1904-05).

33. Richard Stauffer, Luther as Seen by Catholics, Ecumenical Studies in History, no. 7 (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1967), p. 13.

34. Rupp, Righteousness, pp. 22-23.

35. Ibid., p. 23.

36. von Loewenwich, Modern Catholicism, p. 270.

37. Edward Andrew Harvey, "Martin Luther in the estimate of Modern Historians," The American Journal of Theology, vol. XIII (July 1918), p. 331.

38. Stauffer, Catholics, p. 14.

39. von Loewenich, Modern Catholicism, p. 270.

40. Ibid.

41. Stauffer, Catholics, p. 13.

42. von Loewenich, Modern Catholicism, p. 270.

43. Meuser, "Changing Views," p. 42.

44. Faulkner, Latest Critic, p. 346.

45. Luther, III vols. (Freibourg-im-Breisgau: 1911-12).

46. von Loewenich, Modern Catholicism, p. 270.

47. Ibid., p. 271.

48. Stauffer, Catholics, p. 16.

49. Meuser, "Changing Views," p. 42.

50. Harvey, "Modern Historians," p. 333.

51. Ibid., p. 337.

52. von Loewenich, Modern Catholicism, p. 270.

53. Grupp, Righteousness, p. 25.

54. Stauffer, Catholics, p. 16.

55. Frances Xavier Kiefl, "Martin Luthers religiose Psyche als Wurzel eines neuen philosophischen Weltbildes ["Martin Luther's Religious Psyche as the Root of a New Philosophical Order"]. Hochland, 15 (October 1917 - March 1918), pp. 7-28.

56. von Loewenich, Modern Catholicism, p. 276.

57. Ibid.

58. Alfred von Martin, ed., Luther in okumenischer Sicht [An Ecumenical View of Luther] (Stuttgart: Fr. Frommanns Verlag, 1929.

59. Ibid., pp. 9-19. ["Good Points in Luther and Ban Points in his Critics"].

60. Ibid., p. 11. "Er musste vielmehr als der grosste Wundertater der Geschichte erscheinen, wenn er den Massenabfall von diner bluhender, auf der Hohe ihrer Aufgabe stehenden Kirche zustandegebracht hatte."

61. Ibid., pp. 68-79. ["Did Luther break with the Church or did the Church break with Luther?"].

62. Ibid., pp. 186-94. ["What Luther has to say to the whole of Christendom as a Man of Prayer"].

63. Ibid., p. 94.

64. Hubert Jedin, Die Erforschung der kirchlichen Reformationgeschichte seit 1876 [The Investigation of the Ecclesiastical History of the Reformation since 1876] Munster in Westfalen: Aschendorff, 1931).

65. Stauffer, Catholics, p. 39.

66. Meuser, "Changing Views," p. 46.

67. Joseph Lortz, Die Reformation in Deutschland, II vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 1939-40), Eng. trans. Ronald Walls, The Reformation in Germany, II vols. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968) English translation quoted.

68. von Loewenich, Catholicism, pp. 282-83.

69. Stauffer, Catholics, p. 42; also see von Loewenich, Modern Catholicism, p. 287.

70. Adolf Herte, Das katholische Lutherbild im Bann der Lutherkommentare des Cochlaus [The Catholic View of Luther in the Scope of the Commentary of Cochlaus] III vols. (Munster in Westfalen: Aschendorff, 1943).

71. Johann Hessen, Luther in katolischer Sicht [A Catholic View of Luther] (Bonn, 1949).

72. Ibid., p. 9. "Wenn es richtig ist, was der protestantische Theologe K. Sell sagt, dass "das Prinzip des Protestantism im Grunde die Person Martin Luthers "ist, die Verstandigung uber Luther sien. Sie erscheint dann geradezu als der Weg zur Una Sancta."

73. Thomas Sartory, "Martin Luther in katholischer Sicht," Una Sancta, 16 (March, 1961), pp. 38-54.

74. Ibid., p. 42. "Luther die Wirklichkeit des zornigen und erbarmenden Gottes in seinem Leben erfahren hat . . . Risse und Sprunge bekommt."

75. Ibid., pp. 45-46, "die Tur cum Gesprach nicht endgultig zuzuschlagen."

76. Ibid., p. 48, "Wahrscheinlich wurde Luther sich in Grabe herumdrehen, wenn er horte, er sei Verchter eines Subjektivismus order einer 'Gewissensreligion,' in der der Mensch moralisch autonom."

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